

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 55-90 are pending in the present application. Claims 1-54 are canceled and Claims 55-90 are added by the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, the drawings were objected to; the claims were objected to; Claims 1, 2, 10, 12-16, 34, 36-38, 40-44, and 50 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,559,584 to Miyaji et al. (herein “Miyaji”); Claims 22, 23, 27-29, and 39 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,335,787 to Nishi; Claims 30, 45, 46, and 53 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by Japanese Patent No. 2000-19721 (herein “JP’721”); Claim 50 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,590,631 to Miwa et al. (herein “Miwa”); Claims 45-47 and 53 were rejected under U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Miyaji in view of Japanese Patent No. 9-197652 (herein “JP’652”)) and U.S Patent No. 5,723,860 to Hamada et al. (herein “Hamada”); Claim 54 was allowed; and Claims 3-9, 11, 17-21, 24-26, 31-33, 35, 48, 49, 51, and 52 were indicated as allowable if rewritten in independent form.

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter.

Regarding the objection to the drawings, Figure 3 is amended as suggested in the outstanding Office Action. In particular, Figure 3 is amended to correct the labeling of supply valves 23 and 47, which were labeled in reverse. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested the objection to the drawings be withdrawn.

Claims 1-54 are canceled thereby rendering moot the objection to and rejection of claims noted above. New Claims 55-90 are added to set forth the invention in a varying scope and find support in the originally filed specification at least at page 33, line 13, to page

75, line 11, and Figure 1. New Claims 55-90 have also been written to address the objections in the original claims.

Applicant respectfully submits that Miyaji discloses a sealed mask room and sealed mask-reserve rooms. However, Miyaji does not disclose or suggest a mask cleaning system that removes materials having absorption for exposure light and existing around a mask temporarily contained in a mask-reserve room, as recited in new Claims 55, 76, 89 and their sub-claims.

Further, Applicant respectfully submits that Nishi discloses a sealed substrate room and sealed substrate-reserve rooms. However, Nishi does not disclose or suggest a combination of the sealed mask room, sealed mask-reserve room, sealed substrate room and sealed substrate-reserve room, as recited in new Claims 63, 64, 74 and 75.

In addition, JP'721 discloses a mask case that is suitable for gas replacement of a mask space. However, the publication date of JP'721 is January 21, 2001, which is later than March 12, 1999, the foreign application priority date of the present application. Further, JP'721 does not disclose or suggest a mask cleaning system that removes materials having absorption for exposure light and existing around the mask, as recited in new Claims 65, 82, 90 and their sub-claims.

In addition, Applicant respectfully submits that Miyaji discloses a laser light source that emits a beam in an ultra violet range. However, this light source emits the light to a mask in a mask room for exposing the mask, and not for cleaning the mask in a mask-reserve room, as recited in new Claims 57 and 77 and their sub-claims.

In addition, Applicant respectfully submits that Miwa discloses a gas replacement room and filling a sealed space with low absorbent nitrogen gas. JP'652 discloses a mask having a thin film and vent holes. Hamada discloses a mask having a thin film. However, none of these references disclose or suggest a gas replacement system and method to replace

gas in a space between a mask and a pellicle disposed in the vicinity of the mask with a low absorbent gas in a mask-reserve room in an exposure apparatus, as recited in new Claims 55, 76, 89 and their sub-claims.

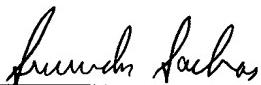
Further, none of Miyaji, JP'652, and Hamada disclose or suggest a mask cleaning system that removes materials having absorption for exposure light and existing around the mask temporarily contained in the mask-reserve room, as recited in new Claims 65, 82 and 90 and their sub-claims.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that new Claims 55-90 are allowable.

Consequently, in light of the above discussion and in view of the present amendment, the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance and an early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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IN THE DRAWINGS

The attached sheet of drawings includes changes to Fig. 3. This sheet, which includes Fig. 3, replaces the original sheet including Fig. 3.

Attachment: Replacement Sheet